



## Health Action Network Society

### Backgrounder- The Genetically Modified “Non-Browning” Apple

The first genetically engineered apple in the world could be approved this year. A small BC company called Okanagan Specialty Fruits has asked the Canadian and US governments to approve a genetically engineered (also called genetically modified or GM) “non-browning” apple.

#### **What is the GM Apple?**

The “non-browning” apple is genetically engineered to keep from going brown after being cut. When apple flesh is cut and exposed to oxygen, it begins to brown but the GM apple or “Arctic Apple” will not brown for 15 to 18 days. The company has inserted modified apple DNA and genetic sequences from two bacteria and one virus. The company wants approval to sell GM Golden Delicious and Granny Smith apples, and wants to engineer Gala and Fuji apples in the future.

#### **Consumers Oppose the GM Apple**

Browning in apples is not a problem, it’s helpful information for consumers. The “non-browning” GM apples are designed to look fresh when they’re not, and will therefore mislead customers.

- 69% of Canadians don’t want to eat the GM apple, according to a 2012 poll commissioned by the BC Fruit Growers Association.
- The U.S. Apple Association says, “consumers like their apples and are not calling for these new “non-browning” cultivars.”

#### **Safety Testing is Inadequate**

The company has not conducted any animal feeding trials to test the safety of eating the GM apples. Health Canada does not do any independent testing but relies on information submitted by the company. There are no consultations with consumers or farmers.

#### **Customer Confusion in the Grocery Store**

There is no mandatory labeling of GM foods in Canada or the US, however the company says that they will make the GM apples identifiable in grocery stores with a sticker that has the corporate GM “Arctic Apple” logo. Even if the company does as it says, such a sticker is not informative and will easily lead to confusion and mistrust in the grocery store.

#### **Apple Growers Oppose the GM Apple**

GM contamination threatens the future of our apples, and the farmers who grow them.

- The BC Fruit Growers Association officially opposes the GM apple.
- The U.S. Apple Association “does not support the approval of this product.”
- The Washington-based Northwest Horticultural Council has asked the U.S. Gov. to stop the GM apple.

#### **Summary: What’s the Problem?**

- **Consumers don’t want the GM apple.**
- **The GM “non-browning” apple will be misleading to consumers because it will look fresh when it’s not.**
- **BC apple growers oppose the release of the GM apple.**
- **Contamination from GM apples is a risk to organic apples and to the market for all Canadian apple producers.**